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THE ABORIGINAL POPULATION OF THE SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

BY

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of the Wowol was on Atwell's Island.

From the demographic point of view the chief justification for tracing the migration of Bubal in the first two decades of the nineteenth century is to indicate how the constant pressure of the Spaniards, through incessant military expeditions, could affect the population. Through a series of years, their native village site having become untenable, the people of Bubal were forced to seek precarious and inadequate shelter wherever they might find it in the depths of the tule swamps until ultimately they could establish themselves in a new home, an island fortress where they might remain relatively undisturbed. Starvation, casual massacre, and disease coupled with exposure must have strongly reduced the total number. Hence a 50 per cent decrease in ten or fifteen years—from Martin to Cabot and Estudillo—is not at all surprising.

The Chunut were first visited by Martin in 1804, who designated their principal rancharia Chuntache but gave no population figures. Two years later, in 1806, it was seen by Moraga, who called it Tuntache and said it had 250 people. Cabot in 1814 said there were 700 persons and Ortega in 1815 found 20 males. Estudillo in 1819 found 103 young braves ("indios gallardos mozos") and 200 women, old men, and children. However, he also states that the captain and "la mayor parte de la gente" were away on a visit toward Lake Buenavista.

The estimates of Cabot and Estudillo appear to be quite reliable. Cabot describes Bubal and then passes on to Suntache. The latter place he says had a population "about the same as the preceding," or 700 persons. Since Estudillo took the pains to count the young men precisely, his remaining estimate must be fairly correct. The total thus is 303 persons present plus more than the same number of absentees, or approximately 700.

Since the location and history of Tuntache was very similar to that of Bubal and since in the period 1815-1819 the population was nearly the same, it is very probable that there was a reduction in population at the former village analogous to that seen at the latter. Although we have no concrete data, such as Martin's report for Bubal in 1804, which may be applied to Tuntache, it may be assumed with safety that the aboriginal inhabitants of this rancharia numbered at least 1,200.

The third lake tribe was the Tachi. This tribe, or its principal village, was first recorded by Martin in 1804. He gives no direct figures but implies that there were 4,000 inhabitants, although he may have been referring to the entire lake area. The next visitor of consequence was Cabot in 1814 who stated that Tache "... segun presenta y por la caseria que la compone ... " had 1,000 souls. At a distance of two leagues he found another rancharia, Guchame, which may have belonged to the same tribe, which "... segun presenta y informes tomados no pasara de 200 almas ... " The next year Ortega attacked the rancharia but the people had been warned and had all fled when he entered. They had not returned, moreover, in 1819, when they were seen by Estudillo. They must have been in bad straits, because Estudillo found them living deep in the swamp, in a "gran Bolson de Tule, sin poder tener lumbre." Estudillo gives no figures but he makes the interesting comment that the Tachi had four chiefs and that the rancharia (or tribe) had several "parts," each at some distance from the others. This raises the question whether Cabot saw the only rancharia of the tribe or

one of a number. The village he saw he examined sufficiently carefully to enable him to count the houses. Such an arrangement is incompatible with rancharias "each at some distance from the others." Furthermore four chiefs would imply four more or less equal subdivisions, or four rancharias and possibly 4,000 inhabitants. At first sight this appears preposterous. However, the following facts should be noted.

1. The area held by the tribe extended across the north and west shores of Lake Tulare from the present town of Lemoore to Coalinga close to the western foothills. This comprises a greater area than the Wowol and Chunut together.

2. Modern informants have been able to give the ethnographers Kroeber, Gayton, and Latta the names of 3 villages for the Wowol, 2 for the Chunut, and 8 for the Tachi. Although the number of villages has no strict quantitative significance, it does indicate the greater size of the Tachi.

3. As mentioned previously, Derby in 1850 found the Tachi tribe to contain about 8000 individuals, of whom 300 lived in the principal rancharia. In view of the very great attrition to which all the open valley tribes had been subjected between Estudillo's visit in 1819 and that of Derby in 1850 it is almost incredible that the Tachi should have diminished only from 1,000 to 800 during that period. It is much more reasonable that the principal village should have declined from 1,000 to 300 as would be indicated by the figures of Cabot and Derby. If so, then the tribe as a whole must have once contained much more than 1,000 people.

4. Father Martin in the description of his trip implies that there were 4,000 people living in the vicinity of Tache. It has generally been assumed, and is so stated by Gifford and Schenck (1926, p. 22), that Martin was referring not only to the borders of Lake Tulare but also to the lower reaches of the Kaweah and Kings rivers. This is simply an assumption and rests upon no unequivocal evidence.

5. Cabot's quite careful estimate for the principal rancharia shows that it was larger than Bubal or Tuntache in 1814. Martin's data for Bubal showed that this town must have contained fully 1,330 persons in 1804. If we disregard any shrinkage prior to that year, the contemporary population of Tache would have reached at least 1,600 if Cabot's estimates for the two villages in 1814 are to be credited.

On the basis of all these facts the author believes that the Tachi aboriginally possessed one village with at least 1,600 inhabitants and that Cabot's figure for this village was reasonably accurate. In addition, the statements of Estudillo in 1819 and Derby in 1850—and both of these observers were trustworthy persons—point definitely to the existence of at least three other villages. These were undoubtedly smaller than the principal rancharia. In default of any concrete data each may be estimated as half the size of Tache, or 800 persons apiece. The total for the tribe would then be 4,000 or nearly twice as much as for the Wowol and Chunut combined.

An aggregate of 6,500 natives for precontact times seems to be indicated in the Tulare Lake basin. The figure 1,100 was obtained for the period of approximately 1850-1852. The reduction would then have been to a value of 16.9 per cent of the aboriginal level. If this seems excessive, it should be borne in mind that the area was subjected to the ravages of disease, both epidemic and venereal, from 1770 forward, as is attested or implied by both Gárcés in 1776 and Martin in 1804.

It was overrun by clerical and military expeditions in 1804, 1812, 1814, 1815, and 1819, not to mention an indefinite number of private raiding parties which have left no trace in the documents. From 1820 to 1850 it was entered repeatedly by ranchers from the coast, American trappers of the Jedediah Smith variety from the southwest or north, and by New Mexican bandits. All these took a toll in the form of mission converts, battle casualties, burnt food stores, and disrupted village life. Finally, it should be remembered that the dry and arid plains of modern Kings, Tulare, and Kern counties bear no resemblance to the former region of rivers, sloughs, swamps, and lakes which once supported uncounted millions of game birds and animals, together with a luxurious vegetation capable of supporting a very dense human population.

TULARE LAKE BASIN 6,500

THE KAWEAH RIVER

Together with the Tulare Lake Basin the lower Kaweah River and its delta from Lemon Cove to below the town of Tulare was probably one of the most densely populated spots in California, or possibly even north of the Valley of Mexico (see maps 1 and 3, area 3). The repeated comment of the missionaries with respect to the "infinidad de gentiles" to be found there creates a subjective impression which is borne out by the numerical data we possess.

There seem to have been two rather indistinctly separated divisions of the region. One, centering around Visalia and occupying the delta and sloughs, contained three tribes, the Telamni, Wolasi, and Choinok, of which the Telamni were the most important and numerous. The other, centering around Lemon Cove and probably extending some distance into the lower foothills, included the Wukchamni, Gawia, and Yokod, the largest group being the Wukchamni.

Martin entered the delta in 1804 and called the people Telame. Moraga in 1806 explored it more thoroughly. According to the Muñoz diary (Oct. 19-20), the party noted Telame with 600 souls, together with a "big rancharia" one league east and the rancharia Cohochs two and one-half leagues east. In addition there were "otras varias rancharias" in the vicinity. The village list appended to the diary gives Telami I ("tendra segun corto computo 600 almas"), Telame II with 200 souls, Uholasi with 100, Eaguea with 300, and Cohochs with 100. Uholasi is no doubt Wolasi, and Eaguea and Cohochs are probably respectively Gawia and Yokod. If the last two are omitted, it is evident that Moraga saw or knew about four rancharias, Telame I and II, Uholasi, and the unnamed big rancharia. To these must be added the "otras varias rancharias," which may have amounted to another four, or eight in all. A population of 2,000 to 4,000 is certainly indicated.

Cabot in 1814 was the next visitor who left a record. He referred to the "Roblar de Telame Rio," which included Telame, the largest rancharia in the Tulares. Cabot's Telame may well have included both the villages to which this name was ascribed by Morgan. If so, on Moraga's figures it must have contained a minimum of 800 persons. A higher number is more probable, however, in view of the fact that it was the largest in the area.

In 1816 Father Luís Antonio Martínez passed through

the region and left a circumstantial account of his visit. Starting from Bubal, he approached the Telame area, reaching first the village of Gelecto, where "... encontraron no mas el cementerio: se habia destruido por las guerras ... " These wars apparently were raids and skirmishes in which refugees from the missions and other Indian villages participated. From Gelecto the party went to Telamni "... al llegar alli los divisaron de Lihuaquilame el grande ... done al dia anterior habian tenido una gran refriega cuyo resultado fue dar muerte a unos 8 hombres ... " The captain of the latter rancharia sent a messenger to Martínez with the report the place contained "como de 300 casados." Gelecto was one league from Lihuaquilame and since the latter village could be seen from Telame the distance between the two could not have been more than a league. Martínez then went six leagues south to Quihuama, before proceeding westward on the way home.

Lihuaquilame contained 300 married men, or heads of families. The aboriginal social family consisted of at least five persons, and even after the disruption suffered from 1804 to 1816 must have amounted to four. The total population, according to this assumption, must have reached fully 1,200, with a probable pre-invasion value of at least 1,500. Martínez therefore gives us four sizable places: Gelecto (depopulated), Telame (minimum 800 according to Moraga and Cabot), Lihuaquilame (1,200), and Quihuama.

Subsequent visitors (e.g., Estudillo, 1819, and Rodríguez, 1828) mention Telame but give no data with respect to size nor do they specify any other rancharias in the immediate vicinity. For basic population data we are consequently forced to depend upon Cabot, Moraga, and Martínez.

In the discussion of Bubal mention was made of the attrition of population due to war and disease during the period following the first entry of the Spaniards in or about the year 1800. That these factors were very serious becomes even more evident from the accounts of the Telame region. Martínez describes the total obliteration of Gelecto, which he ascribes to the "wars." Elsewhere in his report he refers to much internecine fighting among villages and between natives and fugitives from the missions. Moreover, the Spanish accounts repeat ad nauseam the statement that this or that village was attacked or destroyed in the course of various expeditions, or that village after village was deserted by its inhabitants because of fear of the soldiers. It is highly probable that there is a great deal of lost history pertaining to the central valley during this period and that tremendous destruction was inflicted upon the native villages which was never recorded in the official documents.

Hunger and disease were likewise rampant. Clear indication of this condition is contained in the sentence of Ortega, in 1815, with respect to Telame: "... encontrando esta grande rancharia toda desparramada por la mucha mortandad que havian tenido, y la mucha hambre que padecian ... " With regard to the cause of the "mortality" it is clear that a part was due to the killing by the Spaniards and other Indians during the "wars," a part was due to famine, and very likely the remainder was due to disease. Although this factor is not specifically mentioned, the word "mortandad" was widely employed by the Spaniards and Mexicans to connote the effects of an epidemic. Furthermore, the absence of disease would be more difficult to explain than its presence in view of the wide intercourse between the peoples of the southern valley and those of the coast at a time when the Indians of the missions were dying by thousands

from measles, dysentery, and other contagious maladies introduced by the whites. The whole picture is one of ruinous devastation in the Kaweah delta just prior to 1816, with accompanying disorganization of the local economy and reduction of population.

The effect of war, disease, and starvation cannot be emphasized too strongly, nor can mention be made of them too often. On account of their debilitating influence the populations seen in the Kaweah delta and reported in the documents cannot possibly be overestimates of the aboriginal number. On the contrary, they undoubtedly represent too low, rather than too high, a figure.

Reverting now to the villages reported, Moraga mentions eight places, four of them by name or other specific reference. Martinez mentions four, all by name. Cabot refers to Telame as the largest village in the Tulares. Elsewhere (MS, 1818) he states that before reaching Telame there are five rancherias, including Quiuamine and Yulumne. Quiuamine is no doubt the Quihuama of Martinez.

Telame was one village, according to all observers except Moraga (actually Muñoz, who wrote the diary). Moraga ascribes 600 people to the first Telame and 200 to the second. The first estimate, be it noted, was "segun corto computo," or according to a short count. The estimate must therefore on Moraga's own admission be increased, certainly to 1,000 and perhaps more. In view of the size of the well known rancheria Bubal, fully 1,300, Telame must have contained 1,200 persons.

In addition to the two Telames Moraga mentions a "big rancheria" one league to the east. Hence there were three villages which comprised what may be termed the Telame complex. No figures were given by Moraga for the unnamed rancheria, since it was entirely deserted. However, since it was regarded as "big," there must have been several hundred inhabitants, say 500. The total for the triad then would have reached nearly 2,000.

The Martinez description is apparently somewhat at variance with that of his predecessor. Martinez saw, cites distances for, and mentions by name three rancherias: Telame, Lihuauihilame, and Gelecto. They were located within a radius of one league of each other and must correspond to the three seen by Moraga. Gelecto was in ruins, with only the cemetery still in evidence. Hence Gelecto may very well have been the big, deserted rancheria of Moraga. Martinez gives no population data for Telame but says there were 300 heads of families in Lihuauihilame, which was, therefore, without much doubt the largest of the three. According to Moraga's figures, Telame I was the largest. Hence the concordance seems to be that Telame, Lihuauihilame, and Gelecto of Martinez correspond respectively to Telame II, Telame I and the "big" rancheria of Moraga. As pointed out previously, the total inhabitants to be deduced from 300 heads of families, under the conditions existing in 1816 was 1,200. This is twice the estimate of Moraga.

An important point arises here with respect to Moraga's estimates. At Bubal, it will be remembered, Martin found evidence of 1,300 people in 1804 whereas Moraga reported only 400 in 1806. At Lihuauihilame Martinez found according to the statement of the village chief 1,200, although Moraga had reported ten years previously only 600. Furthermore Cabot, at Bubal eight years after Moraga, found 700 persons. For these two important villages therefore Moraga differs flatly with three other competent authorities by a factor of two or three. Similar instances may be found elsewhere in

which Moraga's population figures are far too low. It seems difficult to escape the conclusion, consequently, that Moraga (or Muñoz) consistently underestimated the native population. The reason is not immediately apparent, although several possible suggestions may be offered. Moraga personally had little interest in such matters. Although he himself did not write the account of the expedition to the Tulares in 1806, he did write that of his expedition to the Sacramento Valley in 1808. The latter diary shows very clearly, through the extreme paucity of its population data, that Moraga either made no direct counts or estimates, or considered them too unimportant to mention in his manuscript. For the 1806 trip the estimates were all supplied, obviously, by Muñoz. There is no reason to impugn either the judgment or veracity of this missionary. However, if one examines his account, it becomes evident that Muñoz based his figures either (1) on statements of gentiles or (2) on the number of natives seen by him. The former source might or might not be accurate. The latter was almost certain to yield too low values because the Moraga expedition was notoriously hostile to the natives and at nearly every village approached the inhabitants fled if they could possibly do so. Muñoz therefore consistently saw only the residue, a fraction of the actual number.

For the above reasons the writer believes that a correction factor should be applied to the Moraga-Muñoz data, and unless there is specific reason to believe otherwise, the figures should be regarded as indicating only about 50 per cent of the true population. Such a correction should not be applied to the figures of other explorers, like Cabot or Estudillo, who were far more careful in their methods of estimate.

If, now, we apply a correction factor of 2, Moraga's estimate for Telame I becomes 1,200, or the same as that found by Martinez for the same village (Lihuauihilame). On the same basis Telame II (Telame of Martinez) would have had 400 persons. Gelecto (unnamed by Moraga) was "big" but probably not as big as Telame I. Hence we may assume an intermediate value, say 800. The total for the Telame complex, or the triad of villages, would have been 2,400.

In addition to the triad we have Uholasi and the "otras varias rancherias" of Moraga. Since Moraga gives 100 for Uholasi we may increase that number to 200. Among the other rancherias we have Quihuame (or Quiuamine) and Yulumne, which were noted by later visitors. Moraga, however, in saying "otras varias" clearly means more than two, probably at least four. It is pertinent to note in this connection that some of these may have disappeared during the turmoil of 1806 to 1816 and that their surviving inhabitants may have been absorbed by other, larger villages. Such an explanation would account for the failure of Cabot and Martinez to refer to them. If we assume four villages at the time of Moraga's expedition (and of course the aboriginal number would have been no less), it is safe to consider them as having been relatively small. According to the size scale of the Kaweah villages as a whole 200 inhabitants could reasonably be ascribed to each of them, or 800 for the group.

The aboriginal population of the Telamni and the Wolasi may therefore be set as closely as we can get at 3,200. The Choinok appear to have had only one rancheria. At least there is one and one only which recurs repeatedly in the Spanish documents. This is Choynoque (Moraga, 1806), Choynoct (Ortega, 1816), Choinoc (Cabot, 1818) or Choinocko (Estudillo, 1819). Moraga gave 300 as the population, as did also Estudillo. The two values are comparable, if we remember the attrition occurring

between the years 1806 and 1816. We may then apply the correction factor of 2 and get 600 as the most probable number in 1806. Such a value is also consistent with the status of the Choinok as an independent tribal entity of the Kaweah basin, although it does not take into account any reduction in population prior to the expedition of Moraga. There was doubtless such a reduction, but since we have no direct evidence bearing upon the matter it will be better to let the figure 600 stand.

The total for the Kaweah delta group (Telamni, Wolasi, Choinok) is 3,800. This is indeed surprising but the figure perhaps is corroborated by the statement of the Franciscan President for the California missions, Father Payeras—made in support of the establishment of new missions in the valley—that the Telame district alone contained 4,000 unconverted heathen.

The middle Kaweah above Visalia was inhabited by the Gawia, Yokod, and Wukchamni. The Gawia are represented in Moraga's account by Eaguea (300 inhabitants) and the Yokod by Cohochs (100 inhabitants). The Wukchamni were by far the most numerous and for an excellent account of them we are indebted to Estudillo. This officer, in addition to being a competent field commander, appears to have been a scholar and a gentleman. His report on the Wukchamni village of Chischa is unquestionably the most complete and accurate left us by any of the Spanish explorers and as such is worth discussing in detail.

Estudillo was the first white man to see Chischa. On this point he is very explicit:

... su capitán joasps, ni su gente jamas havian visto tropa, siendo esta la primera vez q. havilan llegado alli, pues hace mucho tiempo paso por abajo (este fue D. Gabriel Moraga en el reconocimiento q. hizo en 1806) y solo noticia tubo por sus amigos de Telame...

Consequently, allowing for possible communicable disease, Chischa was in its aboriginal state when Estudillo saw it.

Chischa was 5 leagues east of Telame and 3 leagues from Choinocko. This places the village, according to the maps of Kroeber and of Gayton, at or just above Lemon Cove in the territory ascribed by these ethnographers to the Wukchamni. Estudillo measured off the dimensions of the village by pacing. The shape was semilunar, crescentic or approximately that of the sector of a circle. The short side ("por su frente") was 624 varas long and the long side ("por la espalda") was 756 varas. A figure plotted on coordinate paper to scale shows that the area was 80,000 square varas. On the assumption that the Spanish vara equaled a yard, and that an average city block measures 300 feet on a side, the village of Chischa would have covered eight city blocks.

Estudillo caused the Indians living in the village to form a line before the town, with the men in a single file and the women and children massed in front of them. He counted the men and found that there were exactly 437 warriors ("jovenes de arma") and "como 600 mugeres y niños." According to the translation made for Merriam (MS in his collection):

Then I went opposite where the invited guests were lodged, and as they all, men and women and boys and girls were presented to me in a confused

mass, I could not count them as I did those of Chischa, but there were perhaps 500 men."

He specifies the 600 men as "jovenes" and adds that there were 200 "mugeres juvenes." He then describes going behind the village to the arroyo, where he saw more than 100 "mugeres de mayor edad," washing seeds for atoles for the celebrants of the fiesta, and an even greater number of "jovenes moliendo en piedras dhas semillas."

The extraordinary care with which Estudillo conducted his investigation can leave little doubt of the accuracy of his figures. He saw 437 "jovenes de arma" in front of the village together with 600 women and children, plus 100 "mugeres de mayor edad" and more than 100 "jovenes" behind the village preparing the meal. Even allowing for some duplication of individuals the population must have reached at least 1,250. The solidity of this evidence for Chischa renders even more probable comparable figures for Bubal and the other large villages of the general area.

Estudillo saw 600 young men and 200 young women who were visitors. If we use the same ratio of young men ("jovenes de arma") to total population for these groups as for Chischa, then the 600 young men represented a total of 1,700 persons. These were all, says Estudillo, from the "roblar," or the Kaweah basin. When he arrived at the village, he was met by seven chiefs (who were already on the scene), two from Telame, one from Choynocho, and four from other rancherias of the "roblar" near the sierra. We may assume that the seven visiting chiefs were accompanied by approximately equal retinues, or 114 persons each. If two of the chiefs and 228 persons came from the Telame district and one chief with 114 persons from Choynocho (i.e., Choinok), then the remainder, 458, were from other tribes. By the same proportionality factor these represented a total of 980, or let us say 1,000, Indians. The Wukchamni and their satellites must therefore have numbered 2,250 individuals in the year 1819. Estudillo himself says that the population of Chischa and its neighbors was 2,400, but he may have included some Telamni among this number. On the other hand, the visitors to Chischa on the occasion of the fiesta could scarcely have included all the inhabitants of the villages whence they came. Some, for one reason or another, must have remained at home. Hence the estimate of 1,000 is probably under the true value.

Now it is important that Estudillo was in the "roblar" in 1819. In view of the severe disorganization, "mortality," and "famine" of 1814 to 1816, the population of the Wukchamni must have undergone a serious decline before Estudillo saw the tribe. Despite the absence of any specific figures the documents give the impression that the reduction of population around Tulare Lake was almost complete by 1819 and that the valley tribes along the margin of the foothills had lost fully half their number. It will be proper therefore to ascribe a one-quarter reduction to the Wuchamni, Gawia, and Yokod. If we accept Estudillo's estimate of 2,400 for the year 1819, the aboriginal population for these groups would have been 3,200.

In the meantime the Mono of the upper river had scarcely been touched, save possibly by epidemics of which we have no record. It is significant that at the great gathering at Chischa there appeared, near the middle of the day, a chief with 69 men and 42 women from a rancheria called Apalame in the interior of the Sierra Nevada. These natives, probably Balwisha or